Two Hundred Years of American Quilts

From the Collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd & Gail Binney-Winslow

Works in the Exhibition

Dimensions are in inches; height precedes width.
All works are from the collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd and Gail Binney-Winslow.

One Patch variation, c. 1800
Attributed to Eunice Farrer Chamberlain
Near Plattsburgh, New York
Pieced and glazed wool worsteds, 102 x 100

Broderie Perse, c. 1825
Origin unknown
Appliquéd cottons with pieced cotton borders, 67½ x 61

All-white, 1826
Amanda Davisson
Shelby County, Kentucky
Cotton with tufted embroidered candlewick, 87 x 75

Mariner's Compass, c. 1840–60
Origin unknown
Pieced and appliquéd cottons with embroidery and stuffed work, 94 x 77

Princess Feather with *Laurel Leaves*, c. 1840–60
Margaret Boon
Lancaster County, Pennsylvania
Appliquéd and pieced cottons, 96 x 94

Sunburst crib quilt, c. 1840–60
Origin unknown
Pieced cottons with woven tape binding, 48 x 48

Variable Star with central medallion motif, c. 1840–60
Eastern United States
Pieced and appliquéd cottons, 91 x 75½

Feathered Star with *Wild Goose Chase* and *Eight-Pointed Star* sashing, c. 1850–70
Origin unknown
Pieced cottons, 80½ x 73½

Leaves summer spread, c. 1850–70
New England
Appliquéd cottons with padded stems and vine, 95 x 95

Sampler, c. 1850–70
Mrs. Cottrell
Virginia or Kentucky
Pieced and appliquéd cottons, 79¾ x 75½

The Sun medallion with *Variable Star* crib quilt, c. 1850–70
Found in Ohio
Pieced cottons, 39½ x 39½

Unnamed pattern, c. 1850–70
New York
Appliquéd cottons, 99 x 82½

Unnamed pattern with four hearts, four leaf sprays, and four pineapples, c. 1850–70
Pennsylvania or New York
Appliquéd cottons, 88½ x 89

Album, c. 1854
From the George Washington MacKay Young family
Baltimore, Maryland
Appliquéd cottons, 106 x 105½

Pineapple, c. 1860–80
Pennsylvania
Appliquéd cottons and pieced cotton sashing, 104½ x 104½

Rising Sun (or *Sunflower*) with *Eagle* border, c. 1870–80
Probably Irontown, Michigan
Pieced and appliquéd cottons, 99 x 72½

Log Cabin-Barn Raising, c. 1875–90
Attributed to member of the Lentz family
Lebanon County, Pennsylvania
Wool challis and cottons with wool twill tape binding, 81½ x 81

Postage Stamp variation, c. 1875–1900
Lancaster or Lebanon County, Pennsylvania
Pieced cottons, 79 x 79

Tumbling Blocks variation, c. 1875–1900
Origin unknown
Pieced silks and velvets, 90½ x 75½

Whig's Defeat variation, c. 1880–90
Pennsylvania
Appliquéd and pieced cottons, 90 x 90

Carpenter's Wheel, c. 1880–90
Lebanon or Lancaster County, Pennsylvania
Pieced cottons, 85½ x 84½

Basket, c. 1880–1900
Pennsylvania
Pieced and appliquéd cottons, 77 x 77

Carpenter's Square, c. 1880–1900
Found in Ohio
Pieced cottons, 79 x 79

Delectable Mountains, c. 1880–1900
Pennsylvania
Pieced cottons, 91 x 89

Hexagonal Star with *Crazy* border, c. 1880–1900
Found in Nantucket, Massachusetts
Pieced, appliquéd, and embroidered silks and velvets, 51½ x 51½

Log Cabin-Barn Raising variation, c. 1880–1900
Origin unknown
Silks, 61 x 61

Path of Thorns, c. 1880–1900
Origin unknown
Pieced cottons, 75¾ x 75

Royal Hawaiian, c. 1880–1900
Hawaii
Pieced and appliquéd cottons, 71½ x 71½

Log Cabin variation, c. 1890–1910
Pennsylvania Mennonite
Wool with silk binding, 71½ x 71½

New York Beauty variation, c. 1890–1910
Origin unknown
Pieced cottons, 74½ x 71½

Triple Irish Chain, 1898
Northeastern Ohio
Pieced cottons, 83 x 71

Log Cabin-Straight Furrow, c. 1910–30
Pennsylvania
Wools and artificial silk, 70 x 70½

Burnham Square with *Nine Patch* center, c. 1920–40
Ohio Amish
Pieced cotton sateen and cottons, 84 x 71

Double Inside Border, c. 1920–40
Ohio Amish
Pieced cotton sateens, 80 x 63½

Coastal Waters, 1984
Gail Binney-Winslow
South Orleans, Massachusetts
Pieced and appliquéd cottons, 84 x 84

This exhibition is a reduced version of "Homage to Amanda: Two Hundred Years of American Quilts from the Collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd and Gail Binney-Winslow," organized by the collectors at the San Diego Museum of Art, where it was shown in December 1984. It is being circulated by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES). After its presentation at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Fairfield County, the exhibition will travel to the Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Huntsville Museum of Art, Alabama; Oglebay Institute-Mansion Museum, Wheeling, West Virgina; The Oakland Museum, California, The Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, New York; and Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, Iowa, followed by an international tour.

Dedicated to the memory of Edwin Binney, 3rd (1925–1986)

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Front cover: Album, c. 1854. From the George Washington MacKay Young family, Baltimore, Maryland. Appliquéd cottons, 106 x 105½ inches.

Back cover: *Whig's Defeat* variation, c. 1880–90. Pennsylvania. Appliquéd and pieced cottons, 90 x 90 inches.

Two Hundred Years of American Quilts

From the Collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd and Gail Binney-Winslow

The first step in the formation of this collection was my inheritance of the candlewick spread signed and dated by Amanda Davisson, my great-great-grandmother. This rare work would have remained a family heirloom only, had it not been for my daughter, Gail Binney-Winslow. After many years of striving to find the proper artistic medium in which to create and produce, she discovered needlework and, in particular, quilting. Eventually, for several years in the 1970s, she owned a quilt shop. While I learned that a quilt can be judged exactly as are other works of art, my daughter absorbed the craft of quilting. As collectors, we form an excellent team—never in agreement for the same reasons, but always able to discuss issues and learn from one another. The result is this exhibition, which presents the current state of our joint collection.

The exhibition has been chosen from our collection of American quilts, which is almost three times as large, and which continues to grow as we find new and intriguing examples. Our aim has been to include the finest quilts in the collection, while avoiding duplication of types. Within the whole collection, my daughter and I have an avowed preference for indigo-blue-and-white quilts, which were selected for their elegant visual appeal. We believe that a fine collection, even when representative of an entire medium, should reflect as much as possible the motivation and personalities of its collectors.

Edwin Binney, 3rd

Domestic sewing and quilting were "woman's work" from the time of the first European settlements in America. The earliest American quilts are very closely related in style and techniques to their English and other European counterparts. Pre-nineteenth-century quilts are of utmost rarity, but a few late eighteenth-century pieces still remain. These are, perhaps, as uncommon as unremodeled eighteenth-century houses. The very early modes of American quiltmaking, however, continued to be used into the first third of the nineteenth century and examples of them are included here.

The all-white candlewick spread by Amanda Davisson represents the rare embroidery spreads of this period. Broderie Perse is an example of another popular late Colonial technique that continued into the nineteenth century. This technique involves cutting out entire motifs from printed fabrics and isolating them in a new pattern on a different background.

During the mid-nineteenth century, early American quilting techniques gradually disappeared and were replaced with patterns and styles that we

still recognize today: *Star of Bethlehem, Sunburst, Mariner's Compass, Princess Feather,* and *Feathered Star.* In this period, American quiltmakers began to emphasize elaborate geometric patchwork and curvilinear appliqué, frequently combining the two techniques in one quilt. Quilts of this period are characterized by the frequent use of an exceptional variety of printed cottons, evidence both of the technological innovations of the Industrial Revolution and of the expanding prosperity of the developing nation.

The development of quilting was not an orderly linear progression. Styles overlapped and new patterns were invented. Quilters were equally tied to the conventions of earlier periods and committed to creating innovations and personal interpretations. Quilters both of yesterday and today have always taken what is familiar to them and have added ingredients from their own imagination and vision.

Quilting styles that were firmly established in mid-century continued through the later nineteenth century. Innovations and a broadening of stylistic tastes in quilting characterize this period. The solid vernacular tradition of American quilting—the "word of mouth" sharing of patterns and standards of quality—was augmented by more self-conscious trends and by the elaborate fashions of the late Victorian period. Ladies' magazines of the later nineteenth century showed increasing attention to quilting, although most writers had little praise for the traditional pieced and appliquéd cotton quilts. Such magazines as *Godey's Ladies' Book* instead favored, and sold patterns for, the lushly embroidered silk *Crazy* quilts. Unlike bed quilts, these were deemed suitable for display as fancywork in parlors.

These fashionable influences can be seen in some bed quilts of the period as well, which combine traditional patchwork patterns with untraditional and highly perishable silks. These examples exist today because they were rarely if ever used. Almost all surviving nineteenth-century quilts in any fabric were thought of as "best quilts," to be carefully guarded from daily wear. The same quilters also produced a staggering quantity of quilts intended to be used up during their lifetimes.

One of the most influential forces in early twentieth-century quiltmaking has been the bold graphic designs of the Amish and Mennonites both in Pennsylvania and Ohio. Their quilts are among the best known and admired today, perhaps because the colors and graphic patterns unintentionally prefigured later developments in modern painting.

This collection was formed to represent the entire range of antique quilts, before such prime examples became completely unavailable. (The so-called "Depression quilts," well known to most Americans, have been omitted here, as have the fascinating and varied production of contemporary quiltmakers, which is perhaps a separate focus for collecting.) Within the range of American quilt types, indigo-blue-and-white quilts are among the personal favorites of the collectors. The strong tonal contrast of these quilts imposes a stringent test of the quiltmaker's skill and experience. Success requires a refined sense of graphic composition and an unerring hand in the assembly of the pieces. The plain fabrics also provide an uninterrupted surface for the display of the quilter's skill and ingenuity in stitching appropriate quilted motifs and textures.

The blue-and-white quilt by Gail Binney-Winslow was made as a special coda to the exhibition. It suggests the range of tradition and innovation in contemporary quilting, and illustrates the personal nature of this collection, which celebrates the heritage of American quilting.

Edwin Binney, 3rd and Gail Binney-Winslow

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